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Openness policy masks more sophisticated Soviet deceit

By Richard Beeston
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With new leadership in Moscow, and Mikhail Gorbachev's policy of "glasnost," or openness, the Kremlin's dirty tricks and disinformation operations are becoming more sophisticated and effective, a State Department-sponsored conference has concluded.

The conference, held in Warrenton, Va., Monday, was attended by CIA, Pentagon and U.S. Information Agency officials along with American and foreign journalists.

U.S. official concern over the new challenge emerged at the conference, which discussed "active measures," a KGB term for deceptive operations in support of Soviet foreign policy.

Since Mr. Gorbachev became Soviet leader in March 1985, U.S. officials have listed three new disinformation campaigns as well as the

continuation of earlier operations.

- One new Soviet campaign claims the CIA was responsible for the mass poisonings at Jonestown, Guyana, to prevent the sect emigrating to the Soviet Union.

- Another blames the United States for the assassination of Swedish Prime Minister Olaf Palme in February 1986. The campaign includes a videotape that asks: "Who killed Olaf Palme? All roads lead to the CIA."

- A third, known as "the baby scam," originated in Cuba. It accuses the United States of importing babies from Latin America to be used for spare parts for Americans needing organ transplants.

Participants at the conference drew a distinction between Soviet disinformation operations in the Third World — considered to be the "main ideological battleground" —

and more sophisticated efforts directed against better-informed industrialized nations.

In the Third World, the ongoing KGB operation to plant the idea that the AIDS virus originated in an American biological warfare laboratory and escaped from a Pentagon laboratory was described as a disinformation campaign of the first magnitude.

Officials said it was gaining widespread belief in Africa, where Africans are angered by Western scientific assertions that the AIDS virus came from Africa, where it may have been dormant for a hundred years, and is related to a virus in green monkeys.

At a recent Third World conference in Harare, Zimbabwe, a pamphlet was widely distributed declaring "AIDS U.S. home-made evil, not made in Africa."

A new twist to the campaign has been warnings to beware of "American war bases" abroad as a dangerous source of AIDS infection.

The newspapers *Ethnos* in Greece and *The Patriot* in India were singled out at the conference as being especially receptive to publishing Soviet disinformation.

The Soviets also have promoted the story that the Union Carbide leak in Bhopal was caused by a Pentagon experiment in "killer gases" used in chemical warfare. A well-worn campaign claims the CIA was behind the assassination of the Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in October 1984.

Officials say the most active allies of Soviet active measures are East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Cuba, Nicaragua, Libya and Ethiopia.

To help counter the campaigns, Washington has set up an inter-agency Active Measures Working Group.

Conference participants said Mr. Gorbachev is advised on disinformation by high-caliber experts who know the West well. His chief for-

eign affairs adviser, Anatoly Dobrynin, for nearly 25 years was Soviet ambassador to Washington and a leading architect of the 1970s detente policy.

This new sophistication showed in the way the Soviets were running such front organizations as anti-nuclear "peace campaigns," experts at the conference said.

They said the former heavy-handed approach had been dropped in a new attempt by the Soviets to reach out to a much wider circle of peace activists in creating a broad front opposed to the positioning of U.S. missiles in Europe and the Strategic Defense Initiative.

Journalists at the conference testified to the replacement of the "gruff old men" at Soviet embassies with better-informed, more approachable diplomats, who provide

genuine information and insights into stories.

They even complained that Moscow is now providing so much news in interviews and press conferences that journalists have no time for investigative reporting.

The Soviets are also seeking to persuade diplomats and correspondents that if Washington did not make an arms deal with Mr. Gorbachev, he would be replaced and the "bad guys" would take over, experts said. The conference was reminded that the Soviets sounded similar themes during the leadership of Nikita Khrushchev and in the early days under Leonid Brezhnev.

A defector from the Soviet bloc who had run disinformation operations advised participants to pay attention to what Mr. Gorbachev is doing, not what he is saying.